

Formation of the Summitville Mine TAG: The TAG Administrator's Perspective

November 5, 1998

The Summitville TAG received its first Technical Assistance Grant on February 7, 1994. We have almost reached completion of our fourth grant cycle and are in the process of planning our fifth. This grant has enabled our community to come to a greater understanding of activities surrounding the clean up efforts at the Summitville Mine Site.

Participation in reviewing documents and work plans for the site began slowly. This site is very complex, because it is at an elevation of over 13,000 feet and access is very limited. The company responsible for this heap leach mining venture claimed bankruptcy in late 1992 and abandoned the site. Activities surrounding the site began in an Emergency Response mode; therefore, specific planning had not been formulated at the beginning.

Almost 5 years later, hind site is 20/20 could best explain the working relationship between the TAG and the EPA. As stated before, we began slowly with our boundaries on this project vaguely defined. The lack of and involvement of community members in the decision making process were a major obstacle from the get-go. About midway into the project, our Remedial Project Manager, Jim Hanley, suggested mediation as a possible solution to our differing opinions. Mediation/Facilitation began in early 1997 and has proven to be a major contribution afforded our community by EPA. TAG members feel that this program could have been invaluable if implemented in the beginning. Whenever there is conflict between agencies and community members, this should be the first resource examined. Although I believe the Summitville TAG still feels somewhat left out of the decision making process affecting the site, our boundaries for participation have been specifically outlined for us.

Through this process, our technical advisors have been asked to attend several meetings with EPA and State to review documents and provide technical exchange with all concerned. Recently, suggestions from our reclamation expert were incorporated into site plans.

We feel that we have developed an excellent relationship with the current EPA staff assigned to this project. When there have been times of misunderstanding between TAG and EPA, EPA staff has been quick to attempt resolving such matters. We have not and probably will never agree 100% with EPA's solutions to this site's acid mine drainage problems but at least we have agreed to disagree.

As stated before, we have come along way since the beginning and I believe that the Summitville TAG is pleased with the relationship we have developed with EPA personnel on the Summitville site, as well as support staff in the Denver office.

Wendy M. Mellott
Administrator
Summitville TAG